



In March 2005, Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet established the Combined Joint Operations from the Sea (CJOS) Center of Excellence (COE) to facilitate joint maritime expeditionary transformation in support of NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

The COE leverages concepts through synergistic, opportunistic, cooperative efforts. It draws benefits directly from the operational tempo of its surroundings and maintains a high state of readiness.

U.K. Commodore Peter Walpole, deputy director Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Center of Excellence, discusses how working, training and experimenting jointly in transformational initiatives will improve interoperability for allied and coalition fighting forces.

*CHIPS: What is your role as the deputy director of the Combined Joint Operations from the Sea (CJOS) Center of Excellence (COE) ?*

CDRE Walpole: As deputy commander, I ensure that the commander's alliance responsibilities are being met. As with many other commanders, Vice Adm. Mark Fitzgerald, 2nd Fleet commander, wears multiple hats and is responsible to different commanders for varying elements of 2nd Fleet's capability. He also has 2nd Fleet to run and train for global operations. So I work to drive forward his agenda for NATO capability.

For the NATO alliance, Striking Fleet Atlantic has provided a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Headquarters in support of NATO missions for nearly a decade. The benefits of sea-basing command and control (C2) for joint operations were quickly recognized by NATO. So, when Striking Fleet answered the call — NATO was delighted.

Over the last 10 years, Striking Fleet Atlantic has been a driver in the overall development of Combined Joint Task Force concepts covering everything from deployed C2, initial entry operations, to theater liaison and reconnaissance. We have also conducted and commanded some of the largest exercises ever seen by the alliance while we have been driving toward delivering CJTF capability. The Strong Resolve series of exercises culminated in Striking Fleet operating as a CJTF headquarters, commanding over 33,000 personnel deployed throughout northern Europe in spring 2002.

The United States also has a proposal to establish a COE for Combined Joint Operations from the Sea resident within 2nd Fleet. This presents the alliance with a great opportunity to capitalize on ongoing initiatives here at 2nd Fleet in the areas of Sea Basing and Sea Strike, and it helps NATO forces develop similar capabilities. The United States is still developing the exact size and shape of the COE, but this is something nations are eager to participate in. The United Kingdom has already agreed

to provide the deputy director for this exciting new center, and like other nations, will provide temporary augmentees until the posts are formally established.

*CHIPS: What have you and 2nd Fleet learned in working together that can help the U.K. and U.S. navies improve coalition coordination?*

CDRE Walpole: I have learned that interoperability in C4I (command, control, communications, computers and intelligence) is less about the technology and more about the procedures, permissions and human culture. I am confident that industry can provide network solutions that address security, boundary protection, bandwidth, addressing constructs and numerous other issues that we previously thought were the difficult ones to solve. In fact, I think the harder issues are the permissions, the demonstration of acceptable risk, the translation of political imperatives and getting people used to doing something different.

In addition, we have reinforced something that I suspect our forebears have known long before the Pacific campaign at the end of World War II when the Royal Navy and U.S. Navy conducted sustained, integrated, combined operations: Personally getting to know and work alongside each other is the best way to start to break down barriers, and it is the first step in delivering combined warfighting capability.

*CHIPS: When we talked a few weeks ago, you mentioned how valuable simulation and virtual training exercises can be, for example, the Joint and Combined Multi-Battle Group Inport Exercise (MBGIE). With the surge in forces fighting the global war on terrorism and the need to respond to any crisis worldwide, do you think virtual exercises will replace live training?*

CDRE Walpole: As technology improves both the granularity and the wider applicability of simulated training, I see these events increasingly replacing live training as a means of developing

and validating capability. There is a lot more that we can do with simulation that we are not yet doing.

On the other hand, I also believe that there is no substitute on the horizon for testing the ability of a warship to completely integrate simultaneous CIC (combat information center), bridge, engine room and flight deck operations while operating in strong winds, pitching seas and poor visibility. In other words, we must let the simulated capabilities demonstrate what they can replace rather than declaring too hastily that we only need to go to sea when we actually deploy. It may be that certain phases of training can be more effectively completed in a simulated environment, and I am convinced that we can demonstrate resource efficiencies in this area. The simulated training future is a very exciting one.

*CHIPS: Are there any technological, cultural or human systems barriers to interoperability between the U.S. and U.K. navies?*

CDRE Walpole: I do not believe that there are any insurmountable technological barriers to interoperability, although available resources can sometimes act as speed bumps on the road to progress. Use of language, however, is a key enabler. When referring to the United Kingdom and the United States someone once said, "We are two people divided by a common language." As a Brit, I need to remember that Americans use words differently and have very different meanings for words in common U.K. parlance.

I also have to constantly remind myself that when operating in broader coalitions many other people are working in their second and third languages when using English. It would do us all well, Brits, Americans, Canadians and Australians to remember to slow down the speed of delivery and avoid the use of endless acronyms and esoteric military expressions. It shows courtesy and consideration to all coalition members and improves common understanding.

*CHIPS: U.S. military services are working to improve interoperability within the services. Is interoperability an issue for U.K. forces?*

CDRE Walpole: Each of the U.S. services are often bigger institutions than the armed forces of many NATO countries. It is not surprising; therefore, that issues of interoperability between the U.S. services can sometimes be as big an issue as between, say, the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy.

Within the United Kingdom, the biggest single initiative to deliver truly joint interoperable forces has been the use of joint funding. There is no single service acquisition funding in the United Kingdom. All acquisition is done jointly. This has forced improved interoperability because the project office buying ultra high frequency (UHF) radios or logistics software tools does so across the whole business area of defense. That means that economies of scale in acquisition and support can be achieved while still taking account of unique environments.

That said, the United Kingdom continues to work with legacy systems acquired before our most recent acquisition reforms,

and it will be a while; therefore, before all of the benefits can be realized. I have no doubt; however, that joint acquisition is the way to go to improve interoperability and deliver value for money.

*CHIPS: Your background as a principal warfare officer (PWO) specializing in communications and electronic warfare, sea tours and responsibilities for all aspects of officers' communications training brings unique talent to your role as the CJOS COE deputy director. How do you apply your experience in making sure that British warfighters get the training and equipment they need?*

CDRE Walpole: Matching valid requirements to realistic opportunities is key to the effective delivery of both training and future capabilities. It sounds a bit like an online dating service, but I have found it to be true.

*CHIPS: The U.S. Army's G6 and chief information officer, Lt. Gen. Steven Boutelle, recently stated that if warfighters aren't given the right technology to work with in the battlespace, they will buy it themselves. Have you found this to be the case in the Royal Navy?*

CDRE Walpole: It may be that our purse strings are a little more tightly controlled and that devolved responsibilities for purchasing do not always extend all the way to the warfighter in the United Kingdom. That said, I do recognize the ingenuity and adaptability of our current generation of sailors, and I am a firm believer that an empowered, informed sailor makes a formidable foe for our enemies.

I always want to allow the good sense and innovation of our people to bring forward the best ideas of how to confront today's challenges. I love telling our people what it is we need to achieve and then watch them use their talent in ways I could not imagine to make it happen.

*In 1994, U.K. Royal Navy Commodore Peter Walpole undertook a two-year tour within the Communications and Information Systems Plans and Policy Branch at the headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic in Norfolk, Va. On return to the United Kingdom, Walpole commanded the Type 23 frigate HMS Westminster for nearly two years. In 1998, he took command of HMS Lancaster, his second Type 23 frigate, assigned to NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic.*

*Promoted to captain in December 1998, Walpole led the Royal Navy study into qualifications and examination structure for commanding, executive and watchkeeping officers on behalf of the Commander in Chief Fleet. Before joining the staff of Second Fleet/Striking Fleet Atlantic, Capt. Walpole served for two years as the Director of Maritime Intelligence within the U.K. Defense Intelligence Staff. He served as deputy chief of staff from June 2001 to July 2003, was promoted to the rank of commodore and took his present position as deputy director Combined Joint Operations from the Sea (CJOS) Center of Excellence (COE).*

*Editor's Note: NATO Striking Fleet Atlantic was deactivated June 24, 2005. The CJOS COE was established as a new beginning for NATO transformation efforts.*

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